

Abundant Life Academy 220 West 300 North Kanab, Utah 84741

May 12, 2006





Utah State Office of Education 250 East 500 South P.O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

THE REPORT OF THE VISITING TEAM REVIEWING

Abundant Life Academy

220 West 300 North Kanab, Utah 84741

May 12, 2006

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, May 12, 2006, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Abundant Life Academy is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Rod Quarnberg is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Abundant Life Academy, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Abundant Life Academy.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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ABUNDANT LIFE ACADEMY

Craig Rogers		Owner/CEO
Marek Helstrom		Executive Director
	ADMINISTRATION ANI	D STAFF
	School Administrati	<u>ion</u>
Rod Quarnberg		Principal
		Assistant Principal
	Counseling	
Inquire Inhugan		Counselor
Jeanine Johnson		Counselor
	Q Q	
	Support Staff	
Bill Blasdell		Building Maintenance
Jorge Lopez		Food Service
Brian Drain		Classroom management liaison
	Faculty	
Gene Drake	Karen Kelly	Mike Walker
Jeanine Johnson	Kathy Miles	

ABUNDANT LIFE ACADEMY

MISSION STATEMENT

Positive choices that commit minds to enquiry, hearts to emotional maturity and lives of service to God and man

BELIEFS STATEMENTS

- We believe that the majority of students have been instilled with a foundation of parental values that are timeless and sound and that when properly nurtured produce young adults that lead the way in expressing these basic values.
- It is our belief that young people are provided with certain windows of opportunities in life where positive intervention can make differences.
- It is quite possibly part of our collective destiny to interface with young adults on the verge of coming to terms with the realities of the modern world and to provide them the constructive guidance that each generation attempts.
- Youth have many questions. We believe that it is part of our personal responsibility as well as our responsibility to future humankind to help them discover answers.
- As mature adults we believe in responsibility, accountability, respect and commitment; part of that belief includes passing on these values.
- We believe children do indeed learn what they live with. Role modeling from peers supported by caring, loving adults is a powerful combination.
- We believe that a highly structured as well as an individually oriented academic program is the ideal environment for the teaching of setting and meeting realistic goals.
- Real life criteria are the basis for establishing academic goals that the student will
 recognize as positive habits to incorporate into his/her lifestyle techniques to
 move past them.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Ralph P. Vander Heide, Ph.D., Consultant in Accreditation, Chairperson

Judith H. Vander Heide, Consultant in Accreditation

Joette Hayden, Director of Education, Triumph Youth Services

VISITING TEAM REPORT

ABUNDANT LIFE ACADEMY

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Abundant Life Academy is located in Kanab, Utah, a small rural community with a population of approximately 3,000. It is located near the Utah/Arizona border in a beautiful setting of majestic red cliffs and wide vistas.

Abundant Life Academy was started in the home of owner Craig Rogers approximately four years ago as a school for young men. It then moved to sites in Mexico, Kanab, and St. George. The school as it exists today was moved to its present location in the former Kane County hospital in August of 2005. The former hospital has been renovated and brought into line with local building codes. It is now a school for both boys and girls. The student population and the growth of the school have steadily increased. Present enrollment is twenty-two girls and twenty-three boys.

The self-study describes the school as "a small, high structured Christian boarding school designed for the unmotivated yet gifted adolescent."

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile and what modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?

The Visiting Team observed that the school employed a systematic process for collecting and managing profile data and that the data provide a comprehensive description of the school. The "big picture" about the performance of the school is clear. Both strengths and limitations were identified.

The goal of Abundant Life Academy is "to empower students with the tools to reach their full potential academically, establish or re-establish their relationship with Jesus Christ, and bring them to a purpose centered life filled with positive choices, continual growth and spiritual success."

In order to best accomplish the above goal, the school gathered data on student performance and demographics and analyzed each student (as well as the faculty) according to the DISC model of human behavior.

DISC is based on the work and theories of Dr. William Marston, who in 1928 wrote *The Emotions of Normal People*. Dr. Marston, who invented the lie detector test, theorized that people are motivated by four primary intrinsic drives. These drives, according to Marston, direct behavior or temperament into the patterns

that he termed DISC. Concisely stated, "D" is the dominant type, "I" is inspiring, "S" is supportive and "C" is cautious.

For more information on the above, the reader is directed to the school's self-study and the work of Dr. Marston.

The school uses significant findings about each student in order to attempt to educate them individually. Information concerning what types students are is given in the self-study along with information on family characteristics, health issues, and ethnic and socioeconomic background, as well as previous education and post-high school plans.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- More extensive entrance testing would be helpful for purposes of student placement.
- The Visiting Team suggests that a test such as Woodcock Johnston be used.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

a) To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?

This has been commendably accomplished. Some five months ago all administrators and faculty participated in a full-day workshop on Utah/NAAS (Northwest Association of Accredited Schools) accreditation procedures. It is evident to the Visiting Team that stakeholders at Abundant Life Academy have collaborated very well in evaluating their school according to the recommendations of the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) which Utah uses.

b) To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?

This has been frankly accomplished, as noted elsewhere in this report.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Abundant Life Academy's desired results for student learning are as follows:

- 1. Making choices that affect student learning
- 2. Thinking and Reasoning skills (critical thinking, problem solving and creative thinking)

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?
 - All school personnel are in full agreement concerning the purpose of the school and the direction it should take in working toward achievement of its mission. The Christian emphasis makes this especially true.
- b) To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?
 - Again, largely due to the strong Christian emphasis, complete commitment is evident.
- c) To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?
 - They all align quite well. The mission and belief statements address key issues pertinent to student learning as well as the development of policy and decision making.

Curriculum Development:

- a) To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?
 - The staff members work well together due to the shared Christian commitment to changing lives. It seems to the Visiting Team, however, that there needs to be a sharper focus on the development of a curriculum that is appropriately and sufficiently rigorous. Some students reported that the course requirements,

accomplished primarily through "packet learning" (materials produced by Alpha Omega publishers—accredited by the Commission on International and Transregional Accreditation and the North Central Association) are very easy. Each student must be sufficiently challenged.

The Visiting Team is not certain how well the faculty understands the Utah Life Skills. These skills should be a strong part of the curriculum in preparing students for future life. Some of the concepts of Utah Life Skills are evident in the curriculum.

b) To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?

Support to develop the curriculum is still emerging, since the DRSLs have only recently been determined.

Quality Instructional Design:

- a) To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?
 - This could be improved. Students are for the most part engaged in packet learning. The Visiting Team recommends that more direct teaching be incorporated into the courses
- b) To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?
 - See above.
- c) To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?
 - Additional opportunities are provided, especially service learning. The Visiting Team commends this effort.

Quality Assessment Systems:

a) To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?

Assessments are primarily based on the packets. Students must demonstrate a high level of mastery. Some other forms of assessment are occasionally used. Student should be tested in different ways.

b) To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?

Assessments align with desired learning outcomes. Also, see above.

c) To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?

Assessments are equitable.

Leadership for School Improvement:

- a) To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?
 - The new principal has played a strong role in improving Abundant Life Academy and creating a supportive academic climate. The owner also is actively involved in this endeavor.
- b) To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?
 - This is emerging. The collaboration is especially commendable.
- c) To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?
 - As noted, assessment is adequate, but should be improved.
- d) To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?
 - The leadership clearly ensures the management of all aspects of the organization. Again, both the principal and the owner provide good stewardship, as does the assistant principal.
- e) To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?

The owner of the school is to be commended for being committed to improvement and to providing reasonable necessary funding.

Community Building:

a) To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?

Throughout this report, community building and cooperation within the school are noted and commended.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

- a) To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?
 - This takes place as needed. For example, some representatives of the school attended a meeting on private schools in February. A workshop on accreditation was conducted for all school personnel in December.
- b) To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?

The school is supportive of ongoing improvement.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

Standard I – Educational Program

Abundant Life Academy meets all four sections of this standard. The educational program is aligned with the mission statement and beliefs. The Visiting Team observed that the vision for the school has been collaboratively developed. The instructional and organizational practices, as well as the policies and procedures, support the desired results for student learning and prepare students to succeed in a culturally diverse, democratic society. The program of studies meets the requirements of the state. The Visiting Team does remind the school to make certain that courses are sufficiently rigorous.

Standard II – Student Personnel Services

All three sections of this standard are met. Personnel services are designed to give appropriate, systematic assistance to students as called for in the subsections of the requirements. The on-call assigned personnel for guidance includes a minimum of one full-time person for each 400 students enrolled. The primary objective of the counseling program is to promote and enhance the academic and personal development of students and to prepare them for post-high school experiences.

Standard III - School Plant and Equipment

This standard is met. The remodeled school plant provides for a variety of instructional activities and programs and incorporates features that contribute to a positive educational atmosphere. It provides for the health and safety of students and all school faculty members and personnel.

Standard IV - Library Media Program

Abundant Life Academy meets the five sections of this standard. The school library media program is a resource for literacy, information, and curriculum support. It contributes to the achievement of the DSRLs. A certified library media teacher provides instruction, resources, and activities to promote independent use of ideas and information. Sufficient funds are provided each year to meet the library/media needs of students and teachers.

Standard V - Records

This standard is met. Student records are maintained, handled, and protected in the best interests of students and parents. Students and parents have the right to access personal student records and are ensured the privacy of such, as guaranteed by federal legislation.

Standard VI – School Improvement (This is addressed in the self-study.)

The five sections of this standard are met. The school improvement plan focuses on the total school rather than each of the separate components within the school. Systematic analysis of data regarding the performance of students has been incorporated into the comprehensive school improvement process, as has ongoing examination of instructional practices. The plan is updated and adjusted each year in alignment with perceived needs.

Standard VII – Preparation of Personnel

This standard is met. All professional personnel are in compliance with the licensing requirements of the state of Utah, and are endorsed or properly temporarily exempted for the subjects they are teaching.

Standard VIII - Administration

This standard is met. The administration of Abundant Life Academy provides educational leadership, supervises and coordinates programs, and carries out the necessary and required administrative procedures. Also see the section on leadership in this report.

Standard IX - Teacher Load

This standard is met. The total number of students instructed by any one teacher in any one grading period does not exceed numbers set by the Utah State Office of Education and/or NAAS.

Standard X – Activities

This standard is met. Abundant Life Academy supports a range of activities that supplement and augment the basic instructional program by providing additional enriching experiences for students consistent with the school's mission and beliefs. Attention is paid to providing equal opportunities.

Standard XI – Business Practices

This standard is met. The school is financially responsible. Proper budgetary procedures and generally accepted accounting principles are followed for all school funds. The school's advertising and promotional literature are completely truthful and ethical.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

a) To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?

The plan is adequate in addressing the DRSLs. A time line has been developed that indicates action steps, resources needed, and persons responsible for overseeing the achievement of the objectives.

- b) To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?
 - Strong commitment to the action plan is evident school-wide.
- c) How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school wide action plan appear to be?
 - Follow-up procedures for monitoring the accomplishments of the action plan are detailed.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends all stakeholders who participated in development of the self-study. It is well done and insightful. The reader is provided with a good blueprint of how the school functions and where it wants to go.
- The Visiting Team commends the owner, principal, and assistant principal for strong, positive leadership and commitment to ongoing improvement.
- The Visiting Team commends the faculty and administration for their dedication to improving the lives of their students.
- The Visiting Team commends all school personnel for being cooperative and forthright with the Visiting Team.
- The Visiting Team commends all school personnel for their collaborative work on common objectives and DRSLs.
- The Visiting Team commends the school for application of the DISC principles, which give students a tool for analyzing themselves and gaining insight about how they may have gone astray. The Visiting Team found that students well understood the DISC concepts.
- The Visiting Team commends all stakeholders, and especially the principal and owner, for the positive changes and progress that have been made in the last few months. Two members of the Visiting Team have been associated with the school for about three years, and have been very pleased to note the leap forward.

• The Visiting Team commends the leadership for employing a consulting librarian who has greatly improved the library.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that all teaching personnel, in collaboration with the school leadership, make certain that courses are sufficiently rigorous and have levels of difficulty comparable to those of courses offered in the public schools (i.e., all students need to be challenged).
- The Visiting Team recommends that teachers employ direct teaching as much as possible (given the different levels of students' achievement and mastery).
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school make better use of assessments of students' levels of achievement upon entry to Abundant Life Academy. Also see "Quality Assessment Systems" above.
- The Visiting Team recommends that students play a greater role in the development of future self-studies.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school carry out the stipulations of any IEPs students may have had at previous schools.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue to develop longitudinal studies concerning the efficacy of its program.

Lastly, the school is reminded that accreditation provides reasonable assurance about the quality of opportunities available to students who attend the school. A primary purpose of accreditation is to protect the public trust. Accreditation promotes voluntary self-regulation. It is a means of showing confidence in a school's performance, i.e. that both quantitative and qualitative standards have been established. An ultimate objective of the self-study and accreditation process should be that schools institutionalize the process of reflective inquiry and thereby become internally responsible for the maintenance of standards—even the creation of standards.

Two members of the Visiting Team have witnessed ongoing and dynamic improvement at the school over the last three years, which has positively affected teaching and learning, and it is anticipated that Abundant Life Academy will continue the process of self-evaluation and ongoing improvement. Sharing, learning, and growing are evident.